PROMETHEA

20 JUNE

AMERICA'S BEST COMICS

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THERE IS NO OTHER SIDE, JUST ENDLESS FALLING, MINUTES OF IT, HOURS, WAITING FOR IMPACT THAT WILL NEVER COME.

AFTER JUST TEN MINUTES TOO HOARSE, TOO EMOTIONALLY EXHAUSTED NOW TO EVEN SCREAM.

THREE HOURS LATER THERE COMES BLACKOUT, COMES UNCONSCIOUSNESS...

THERE COMES AWAKENING.

FALLING WAS A DREAM, AND THE REALITY IS THIS FLOURESCENT DESERT. BARREN EERINESS EXTENDS TO THE HORIZON, IF THERE IS ONE.

NOTHING FOR IT BUT TO WALK WITHOUT DIRECTION FOR PERHAPS A SUNLESS DAY UNTIL, AT LAST, DESPAIRING SLEEP...

AND FALLING.

OBVIOUSLY THE DESERT HAS BEEN ONLY FANTASY, THE COMPENSATION CLUTCHED AT BY MINDS DESPERATE TO ESCAPE PLUMMETING HORROR.

THIS TIME, MORE ACCUSTOMED, PASSING OUT TAKES LONGER. ONLY AFTER SEVERAL HOURS OF WEEPING INTO SLIPSTREAM DO THE EYES CLOSE...

OPENING TO THE COLD SLAP OF WHITECAP.

SUDDENLY REMEMBERING THE CLIFFTOP LEAP INTO THIS DARK, GREAT SEA. ALL ELSE, THE PLUNGE, THE WASTELAND, WAS HALLUCINATION BORN OF ICY WATER AND FATIGUE.

SWIM ON. STRUGGLE TO STAY AFLOAT, AWAKE, NOT SLIP INTO UNCONSCIOUSNESS...

AND FALLING.

FALLING.

FALLING.

AHHAAAAUH!
PROMETHEA
"THE STARS ARE BUT THISTLES..."

OHH, GOD.
DREAMING. I WAS DREAMING AGAIN, OR ELSE THIS IS...
W-WE WERE STILL FALLING, WEREN'T WE?
YEAH.
COME ON. LET'S KEEP MOVING.
ALAN MOORE SCRIPT
J.H. WILLIAMS III PENCILS
MICK GRAY INKS
JEROMY COX COLORS
TODD KLEIN LETTERS
POZNER & QUINN ASST. ED.
SCOTT DUNBIER EDITOR
MOORE & WILLIAMS III CREATORS

BARBARA, THERE'S NO POINT. WE'RE NOT GOING ANYWHERE. WE'RE LOST.
GOD HELP ME, I WISH I WAS DEAD.
I'M ALREADY DEAD. I JUST WISH I'D NEVER BEEN BORN.
LOOK AT THIS PLACE. IT'S HORRIBLE. THESE RADIOACTIVE WEEDS, THESE BUSTED UP PAVING SLABS...
THEY'RE NOT PAVING SLABS. JUST ROCKS, SOME ACCIDENT IN HOW THEY LOOK.
WE JUMPED OVER THE EDGE OF EVERYTHING. THERE'S NO PATHWAYS OUT HERE.
WELL, COULDN'T THERE ONCE HAVE BEEN A PATH OR SOMETHING?
THAT LOOKS LIKE ONE OF THEM HIGHWAY MARKERS.
IT...GOD. YOU'RE RIGHT. IT DOES... BUT IT'S SO CORRODED YOU CAN'T READ IT ANYMORE.
I DON'T UNDERSTAND. IN ALL JACK FAUST'S BOOKS, IT SAYS THERE'S NO PATH ACROSS FROM THE FOURTH SPHERE...
I CAN SEE SOMETHING UP AHEAD...
IT'S...IT'S ALMOST AS IF THERE USED TO BE A PATH HERE, LIKE YOU SAID.
BUT...I MEAN, TAROT PATHS AREN'T JUST ROADWAYS. THEY'RE THE CONNECTIONS OF OUR SOULS.
WHAT CAN HAVE HAPPENED TO IT?
SOPHIE? YOU BETTER COME LOOK AT THIS...
WHAT DOES THIS SAY? "HE...FAR"? "HE...EAR"? I CAN'T MAKE IT OUT.

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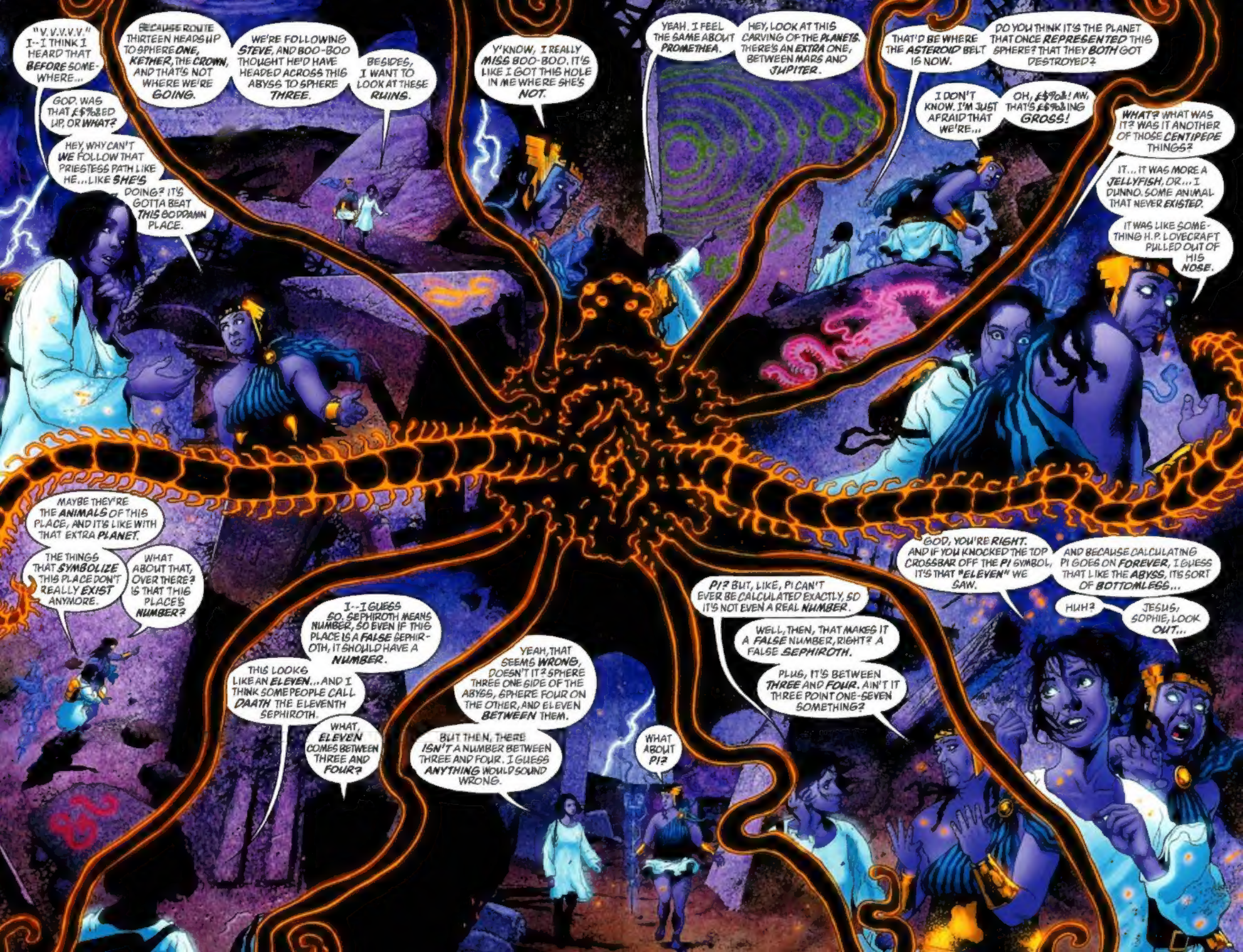
JIM LEE, Editorial Director - WildStorm • JOHN NEE, VP & General Manager - WildStorm • SCOTT DUNBIER, Group Editor

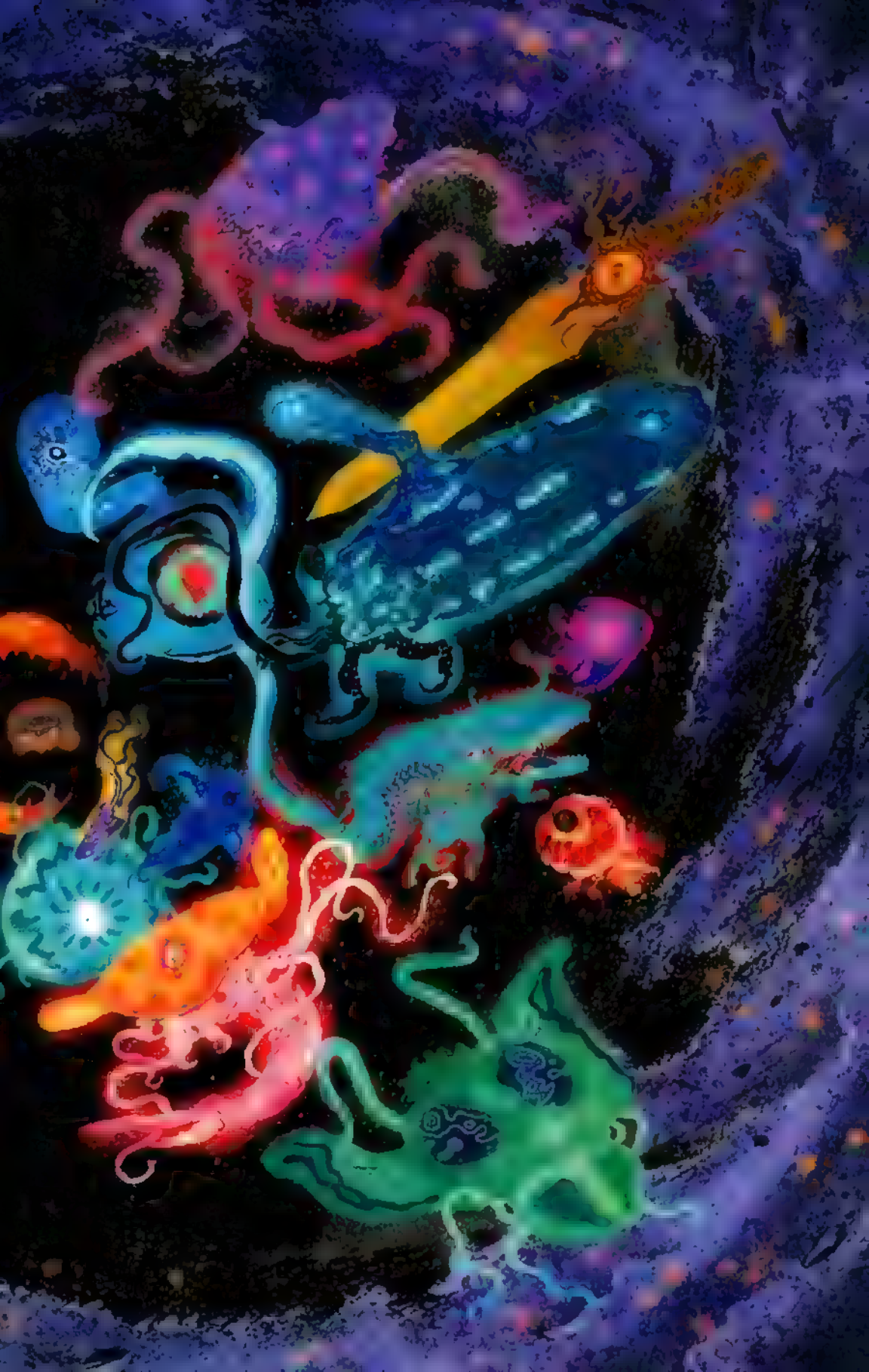
"THE BEGGAR." THE STATUE LOOKS LIKE IT USED TO BE A BEGGAR. BUT THERE'S NO SUCH TAROT CARD.
BARBARA, WE'RE RIGHT OFF THE MAP HERE.
I THOUGHT YOU SAID THIS KABALLAH BUSINESS WAS A MAP OF EVERYTHING?
IT IS... BUT HERE, THE ABYSS, THERE'S JUST SORT OF A GAP.
"THE BEGGAR." IT HAS TO MEAN SOMETHING.
OR... I DUNNO. MAYBE IT MEANT SOMETHING ONCE, BUT DOESN'T ANYMORE.
ALL I CAN REMEMBER WITH BEGGARS IS THOSE OLD STORIES WHERE KINGS AND GODS AND STUFF DISGUISE THEMSELVES.
YEAH. WHEN THEY WANT TO ENTER THE ORDINARY HUMAN WORLD OR SOMETHING.
I GUESS THIS ABYSS IS WHERE GOD'S ENERGY ENTERS THE UNIVERSE FROM...
SO... LEMME SEE, THERE'S JUST SPHERE FOUR, THEN THIS ABYSS THING, THEN SPHERE THREE ON THE OTHER SIDE?
THERE'S NOTHING IN-BETWEEN?
WELL... SOME BOOKS MENTIONED SOMETHING CALLED THE FALSE SEPHIROTH, OR THE INVISIBLE SEPHIROTH.
IT LOOKED HARD, SO I SKIPPED IT.

ACTUALLY, THINKING ABOUT IT, THAT WAS PROBABLY A MISTAKE.
WH-WHAT IS THIS PLACE?
I--I DON'T THINK IT IS A PLACE. NOT ANY MORE.
IT'S LIKE WHATEVER WAS HERE JUST...I DUNNO. COLLAPSED OR SOMETHING.
BUT...THESE SPHERES ARE WHOLE STATES OF BEING, RIGHT? HOW COULD ONE COLLAPSE?
I DON'T KNOW.
I THINK THAT SAYS "DAATH," OVER THE ARCH.
"DAATH?" WHAT, LIKE DAATH VADER?
I THINK IT'S A HEBREW WORD THAT MEANS "KNOWLEDGE." IT'S...
AAUUGH! WHAT'S THAT?

WHAT'S WHAT?
I...THERE WAS SOME SCUTTLING THING, RAN BEHIND THAT MASONRY!
IT WAS LIKE THIS DAYGLO CENTIPEDE...
HEY, THAT'S IT. DAYGLO. THIS PLACE IS SORT OF COLORED LIKE BLACK LIGHT.
MAYBE "INVISIBLE" SEPHIROTH MEANS ULTRA-VIOLET?
HEY! I SEE SOME-BODY!
YOU'RE RIGHT. IT...IT'S SOMEBODY ON A CAMEL.
AND THEY'RE ON SOME SORT OF PATH THROUGH THESE RUINS...
HEY! HEY, YOU!
WAIT UP!

YES?
UH, EXCUSE US, LADY, BUT WE'RE SORT OF LOST OUT HERE. WE WONDERED IF YOU COULD MAYBE...
BARBARA, WAIT. THAT'S NOT A WOMAN. IT LOOKS MORE LIKE A GUY, OR...
OH JEEZ.
A-ARE YOU ALEISTER CROWLEY?
SEE! FIVE FOOTPRINTS OF A CAMEL...
V. V. V. V. V.
WHY, WHATEVER DO YOU GIRLS MEAN? WHEN I'M LIKE THIS, YOU CAN CALL ME ALICE.
YOU SEE, I'M RIDING ROUTE THIRTEEN, GIMEL, THE HIGH PRIESTESS, UP TO THE CROWN.
HERE, MAGICIANS BECOME MAGIC ITSELF. THE PENETRATOR BECOMES THE PENETRATED.
MALE BECOMES FEMALE.
TOODLE-PIP, DEARIES.
"GIMEL." THAT'S THE PATH FROM TIPHERETH TO KETHER. DOESN'T IT MEAN CAMEL, IN HEBREW?
WAIT A MINUTE... SO THIS HIGH PRIESTESS PATH YOU'RE ON, YOU HAVE TO TRAVEL IT IN DRAG?
GOODNESS, NO. I'M EVERY BIT THE WOMAN YOU ARE, DEAR.
LOOK...
YOU SEE? THAT PRETTY LITTLE "V" WITH A CLEFT? JUST LIKE YOURS.
DO YOU KNOW, I'VE HEARD SOME MEN... THE AWFUL, VULGAR CREATURES... REFER TO IT AS "THE CAMEL'S HOOF?"
UHH...
ANYWAY, I CAN'T STAND HERE GOSSIPING WITH YOU ALL NIGHT. I'VE AN APPOINTMENT WITH THE CROWN OF CREATION, AND...
OH, I SAY! ISN'T THAT INTERESTING?
JUST THERE, IN THE SAND BEHIND ME.


"V.V.V.V.V." I--I THINK I HEARD THAT BEFORE SOMEWHERE...
GOD, WAS THAT £$%&ED UP, OR WHAT?
HEY, WHY CAN'T WE FOLLOW THAT PRIESTESS PATH LIKE HE...LIKE SHE'S DOING? IT'S GOTTA BEAT THIS GODDAMN PLACE.
BECAUSE ROUTE THIRTEEN HEADS UP TO SPHERE ONE, KETHER, THE CROWN, AND THAT'S NOT WHERE WE'RE GOING.
WE'RE FOLLOWING STEVE, AND BOO-BOO THOUGHT HE'D HAVE HEADED ACROSS THIS ABYSS TO SPHERE THREE.
BESIDES, I WANT TO LOOK AT THESE RUINS.
Y'KNOW, I REALLY MISS BOO-BOO. IT'S LIKE I GOT THIS HOLE IN ME WHERE SHE'S NOT.
YEAH. I FEEL THE SAME ABOUT PROMETHEA.
HEY, LOOK AT THIS CARVING OF THE PLANETS. THERE'S AN EXTRA ONE, BETWEEN MARS AND JUPITER.
THAT'D BE WHERE THE ASTEROID BELT IS NOW.
DO YOU THINK IT'S THE PLANET THAT ONCE REPRESENTED THIS SPHERE? THAT THEY BOTH GOT DESTROYED?
I DON'T KNOW. I'M JUST AFRAID THAT WE'RE...
OH, £$%&! AW, THAT'S £$%&ING GROSS!
WHAT? WHAT WAS IT? WAS IT ANOTHER OF THOSE CENTIPEDE THINGS?
IT...IT WAS MORE A JELLYFISH, OR...I DUNNO. SOME ANIMAL THAT NEVER EXISTED.
IT WAS LIKE SOMETHING H.P. LOVECRAFT PULLED OUT OF HIS NOSE.
MAYBE THEY'RE THE ANIMALS OF THIS PLACE, AND IT'S LIKE WITH THAT EXTRA PLANET.
THE THINGS THAT SYMBOLIZE THIS PLACE DON'T REALLY EXIST ANYMORE.
WHAT ABOUT THAT, OVER THERE? IS THAT THIS PLACE'S NUMBER?
I--I GUESS SO. SEPHIROTH MEANS NUMBER, SO EVEN IF THIS PLACE IS A FALSE SEPHIROTH, IT SHOULD HAVE A NUMBER.
THIS LOOKS LIKE AN ELEVEN...AND I THINK SOME PEOPLE CALL DAATH THE ELEVENTH SEPHIROTH.
WHAT, ELEVEN COMES BETWEEN THREE AND FOUR?
YEAH, THAT SEEMS WRONG, DOESN'T IT? SPHERE THREE ONE SIDE OF THE ABYSS, SPHERE FOUR ON THE OTHER, AND ELEVEN BETWEEN THEM.
BUT THEN, THERE ISN'T A NUMBER BETWEEN THREE AND FOUR. I GUESS ANYTHING WOULD SOUND WRONG.
WHAT ABOUT PI?
PI? BUT, LIKE, PI CAN'T EVER BE CALCULATED EXACTLY, SO IT'S NOT EVEN A REAL NUMBER.
WELL, THEN, THAT MAKES IT A FALSE NUMBER, RIGHT? A FALSE SEPHIROTH.
PLUS, IT'S BETWEEN THREE AND FOUR. AIN'T IT THREE POINT ONE-SEVEN SOMETHING?
GOD, YOU'RE RIGHT. AND IF YOU KNOCKED THE TOP CROSSBAR OFF THE PI SYMBOL, IT'S THAT "ELEVEN" WE SAW.
AND BECAUSE CALCULATING PI GOES ON FOREVER, I GUESS THAT LIKE THE ABYSS, IT'S SORT OF BOTTOMLESS...
HUH?
JESUS, SOPHIE, LOOK OUT...

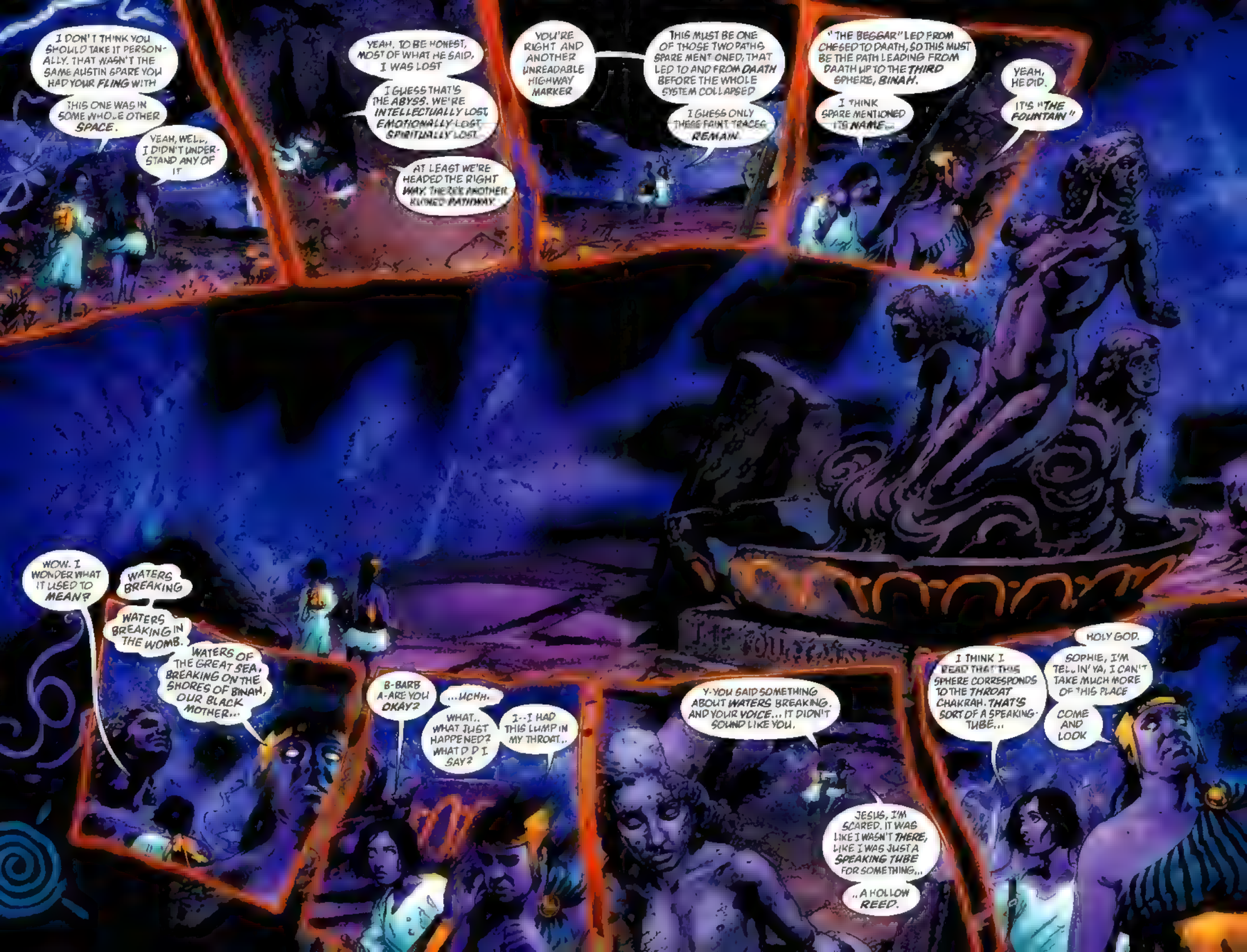


I--IT'S LIKE A BLACK HOLE, EXCEPT IT'S MAUVE...
I--I THINK IT'S A HOLE THROUGH THE ENTIRE TREE.
WE HAVE TO GO AROUND IT
BUT... THAT'S LIKE A HOLE THROUGH EXISTENCE. WHERE DOES IT LEAD?
THE REVERSE SIDE OF THE TREE, MAYBE? WHERE THINGS LIKE THAT LIVE?
I-IT FEELS LIKE A HOLE THROUGH ME. I'M GETTING THIS LUMP IN MY THROAT...
UH, BARBARA?
BARBARA, UP AHEAD, THERE'S SOMETHING ELSE...

A BLACK TOWER.
Y'KNOW, FOR SAYIN' THERE'S SUPPOSED TO BE NOTHIN' HERE, THIS PLACE IS PRETTY SCENIC.
W-WE SHOULD PROBABLY CHECK IT OUT.
SOPHIE, I DON'T KNOW. MAYBE SOMETHING BAD LIVES THERE.
WELL, THAT LOOKS LIKE A REGULAR PERSON WAITING OUTSIDE TO WELCOME US
IN FACT...
OH IT'S YOU.
HELLO AGAIN.
A-AUSTIN?

AUSTIN SPARE, IT IS. IT'S YOU. GOD, YOU'RE SO MUCH YOUNGER. YOU LOOK BEAUTIFUL...
OF THIS I KNOW NOTHING OF THIS, NOTHING MAY BE SAID
H-HE SAID HE WOULDN'T KNOW US IF WE MET AGAIN.
MR SPARE? WE'RE PILGRIMS
CAN YOU TELL US WHERE WE ARE?
WE ARE NOT IN NON-EXISTENCE, NEITHER ARE WE IN THAT EXISTENCE WHICH IS GOD, NEITHER THAT WHICH IS NOT GOD.
THIS IS THE TOWER OF THE ADEPTS, THE BLACK BROTHERS, AND IT IS AT DAATH.
NO LIGHT IS HERE EMITTED
SOPHIE, I DON'T LIKE THIS. THIS AIN'T LIKE THE OTHER PLACES WE'VE BEEN. THEY ALL MADE SENSE...
I--I THINK THAT IF DAATH MEANS KNOWLEDGE, IT'S A KIND OF KNOWLEDGE THAT'S BEYOND SENSE.
MR. SPARE? CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT DAATH? HOW DID IT GET LIKE THIS?
DAATH, IN THE GREAT BEGINNING, WAS A SEPHIROTH AS TRUE AS ANY. PATHS LED TO AND FROM IT, BOTH THE BEGGAR AND THE FOUNTAIN.
THEN, THE TREE WAS OF A WHOLE. GOD WAS NOT SEPARATED FROM GOD'S UNIVERSE
NOW CAME THE FALL. NOW CAME THE CATACLYSM.
THE LIGHTNING ENERGIES OF GOD, DESCENDING, OVERWHELMING THE STRUCTURE OF EXISTENCE.
ITS LOWER SPHERES WERE BROKEN FROM THE THREE DIVINE SUPERNALS.
WHERE DAATH HAD BEEN WAS NOW A DREADFUL ABSENCE.
WAS A MARVELOUS CRACK IN EVERYTHING

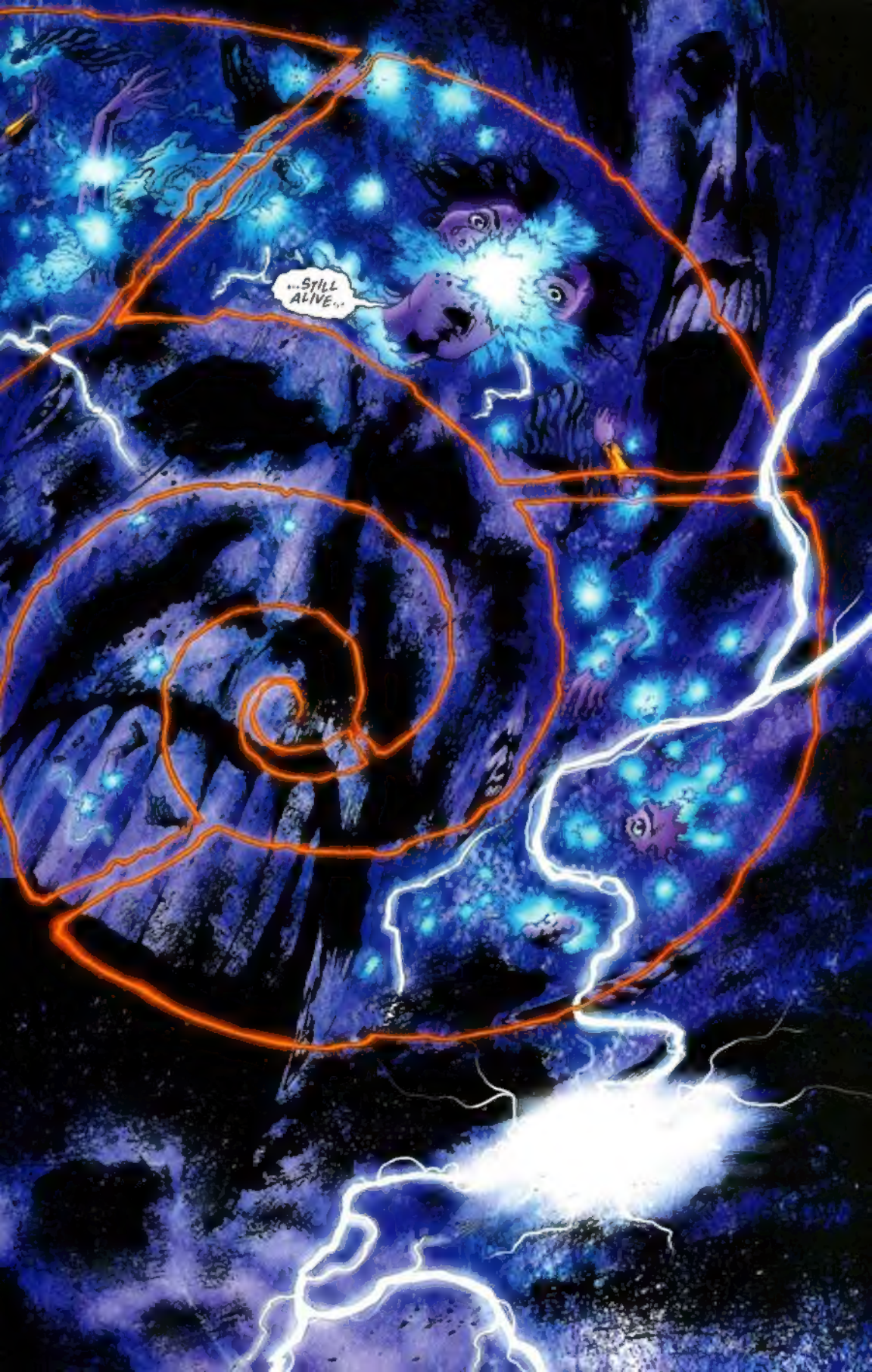
OH JESUS. YOU MEAN...THE WHOLE UNIVERSE, ALL OF EXISTENCE...
...IT BROKE IN HALF? WE'RE LIVING IN A BROKEN COSMOS BECAUSE OF THIS .THIS FALL. THIS DISASTROUS ACCIDENT...
THE THREE HEADS OF GOD WERE SUNDERED FROM EXISTENCE. WHO SHALL SAY THAT THIS WAS ACCIDENT?
AND LIKEWISE, WHO SHALL SAY THAT ACCIDENTS BE NOT BUT ARABESQUES WITHIN SOME WIDER FIGURE?
OF THIS, NOTHING IS KNOWN
BUT DAATH MEANS KNOWLEDGE, DOESN'T IT? HOW CAN KNOWLEDGE BE SYMBOLIZED BY A BARREN PLACE LIKE THIS?
LIKE ITS SHATTERED PLANET OR ITS UNSEEN COLOR, DAATH IS THAT KNOWLEDGE KNOWABLE ONLY BY ITS ABSENCE.
IT IS THE NEITHER-NEITHER. IT IS THAT KNOWLEDGE HERE PURSUED BY THE BLACK BROTHERS IN THE TOWER OF THE ADEPTS
NO LIGHT IS HERE EMITTED
FARE YOU WELL, SISTERS
HUH.
WELL, IF HE WAS EMBARRASSED ABOUT RUNNING INTO AN OLD ONE-NIGHT STAND, HE ONLY HAD TO SAY.


I DON'T THINK YOU SHOULD TAKE IT PERSONALLY. THAT WASN'T THE SAME AUSTIN SPARE YOU HAD YOUR FLING WITH
THIS ONE WAS IN SOME WHOLE OTHER SPACE.
YEAH, WELL, I DIDN'T UNDERSTAND ANY OF IT
YEAH. TO BE HONEST, MOST OF WHAT HE SAID, I WAS LOST
I GUESS THAT'S THE ABYSS. WE'RE INTELLECTUALLY LOST, EMOTIONALLY LOST, SPIRITUALLY LOST.
AT LEAST WE'RE HEADED THE RIGHT WAY. THERE'S ANOTHER KLIPHOTH PATHWAY.
YOU'RE RIGHT AND ANOTHER UNREADABLE HIGHWAY MARKER
THIS MUST BE ONE OF THOSE TWO PATHS SPARE MENTIONED, THAT LED TO AND FROM DAATH BEFORE THE WHOLE SYSTEM COLLAPSED
I GUESS ONLY THESE FAINT TRACES REMAIN.
"THE BEGGAR" LED FROM CHESED TO DAATH, SO THIS MUST BE THE PATH LEADING FROM DAATH UP TO THE THIRD SPHERE, BINAH.
I THINK SPARE MENTIONED ITS NAME...
YEAH, HE DID.
IT'S "THE FOUNTAIN"
WOW. I WONDER WHAT IT USED TO MEAN?
WATERS BREAKING
WATERS BREAKING IN THE WOMB.
WATERS OF THE GREAT SEA, BREAKING ON THE SHORES OF BINAH, OUR BLACK MOTHER...
B-BARB A-ARE YOU OKAY?
...UCHH.
WHAT.. WHAT JUST HAPPENED? WHAT D D I SAY?
I--I HAD THIS LUMP IN MY THROAT..
Y-YOU SAID SOMETHING ABOUT WATERS BREAKING. AND YOUR VOICE... IT DIDN'T SOUND LIKE YOU.
JESUS, I'M SCARED. IT WAS LIKE I WASN'T THERE, LIKE I WAS JUST A SPEAKING TUBE FOR SOMETHING...
..A HOLLOW REED.
I THINK I READ THAT THIS SPHERE CORRESPONDS TO THE THROAT CHAKRAH. THAT'S SORT OF A SPEAKING TUBE...
HOLY GOD.
SOPHIE, I'M TELLIN' YA, I CAN'T TAKE MUCH MORE OF THIS PLACE
COME AND LOOK

AH.
OHH...
IS THAT...? IT IS. IT'S THAT CROWLEY FREAK AGAIN, ONLY THIS TIME HE'S A MAN.
IS HE DOIN' THAT OTHER GUY?
UH... YEAH.
I--I THINK THAT'S VICTOR NEUBERG. I TH'INK THIS 'S THE CHORONZON WORKING
THE WHAT?
CROWLEY AND HIS LOVER, THE POET VICTOR NEUBERG, WENT INTO THE DESERT TO SUMMON CHORON-ZON, THE DEMON OF DISPERSAL...
THERE. OUR WILLS ARE EXHAUS-TED.
STAY IN THE CIRCLE, BROTHER. I'M GOING TO TRY SOMETHING...
I--I HEARD THAT CHORONZON INHABITS THIS ABYSS WE'RE IN. HE'S LIKE...CHAOS. HE'S CONSTANTLY TEARING HIS WHOLE UNIVERSE INTO PIECES.
ALEISTER, WHERE ARE YOU GOING?
DON'T GO INSIDE THE TRIANGLE! 'HAT'S FOR SUMMONING CHORONZON INTO!

WHAT'S CROWLEY DOING?
F-FOR SOME REASON, HE INSISTED ON BEING IN THE TRIANGLE. HE CALLED THE DEMON INTO HIMSELF.
NEUBERG REPORTED HORRIBLE TRANSFORMATIONS AND POSSESSIONS.
WHATEVER HAPPENED, IT DESTROYED THEIR RELATIONSHIP AND NEARLY DESTROYED NEUBERG.
BUT...THIS CHORONZON THING, IT SOUNDS £$%ā IN' TERRIFYING! WHY WOULD CROWLEY CALL IT INTO HIMSELF?
DID HE WANT TO GET TORN TO PIECES?
I--I DON'T KNOW.
MAYBE HE THOUGHT BEING TORN TO PIECES WAS NECESSARY...
NECESSARY? WHAT, BEING REDUCED TO PRACTICALLY NOTHIN'?
COME ON. I WANT US TO BE OUT OF HERE BEFORE WHATEVER HE'S SUMMONIN' ACTUALLY DECIDES TO SHOW UP!
OH, NO.
BARB, I THINK WE'RE TOO LATE.

SOPHEEEE!
AAAA!
I CAN'T! OH GOD, THIS WIND, IT'S TEARING ME TO...
AAA! AAAAA! SOPHIE, HELP ME...
NO. NO NO NO. I'M STILL ALIVE. I'M STILL ALIVE. I'M...


...STILL ALIVE...

AND FALLING.
NOTHING ELSE, NONE OF THE REST, WAS TRUE, SAVE THIS INTERMINABLE DROP.
EVENTUALLY... HOURS? CENTURIES?... COMES MERCIFUL UNCONSCIOUSNESS, AND...
:CUHH:
OH, NO. OH, NOT THIS AGAIN. SOPHIE, I'M GONNA GO MAD.
IS THIS IT? IS THIS WHAT WE DO FOREVER? WE JUST FALL OR SWIM, OR STUMBLE THROUGH THAT NIGHTMARE DESERT?
BARBARA, I...I THINK MY FOOT, IT JUST TOUCHED BOTTOM.
Y-YOU'RE RIGHT.
DOES THIS MEAN WE MADE IT? WE GOT ACROSS THE ABYSS?
I--I THINK SO. LET'S HEAD UP THIS BLACK BEACH, SEE IF THERE'S ANYTHING THAT WE...
...RECOGNIZE...
BUNAH
NEXT:
THE WINE OF HER FORNI-CATIONS